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Housekeepers' Chat

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NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Questions and Answers." From Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

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"There was once an old sailor my grandfather knew,
Who had so many things which he wanted to do,
That whenever he thought it was time to begin,
He couldn't because of the state he was in."

A. A. Milne.

I can sympathize with the old sailor. I'm in the same state myself; so many questions to answer, and how can I tell where to begin? Suppose I'd better take them alphabetically, beginning with C, for codliver oil.

Here's the question: "I have two small boys in my family, and am anxious that they have the proper food. After hearing your talk the other day, on "Sunshine and Codliver Oil," I purchased a bottle of the oil, and tried to disguise it for the children in orange juice, and so forth, but was not successful. I bought the flavored oil, as the druggist said it was easier to take, but that made no difference to my small sons. Do you know of any way to make them like it?"

I have never had any trouble getting Billy to take cod liver oil; he likes it, or rather, he hasn't discovered yet that modern children are supposed to be "problems," when it comes to cod liver oil, spinach, and so forth. I took your letter to Rowena Schmidt, of the Bureau of Home Economics. Miss Schmidt has had experience in giving cod liver oil to children in nursery schools. Here is the answer she wrote to the letter I have just read you:

"Aunt Sammy has asked me to answer your letter in which you tell about the difficulty you had in giving cod liver oil to your children. I think that any one of several reasons may explain your trouble. The first that comes to my mind is the type of oil that you chose. The sweet, flavored oil has a sickening effect on some people, and is more difficult for them than the straight oil. Try to get pure cod liver oil, put up by any of the reliable companies. I have had some experience in giving cod liver oil to children of 2, 3, and 4 years of age in nursery schools, and I have found that in general they do not object to the flavor, or the consistency, when the oil is given in orange juice. In one nursery school, the children took the plain oil in orange juice more easily than any specially prepared oil.

"I wonder if you have tried taking cod liver oil yourself. I did, after serving portions in small sherbet glasses, to about two dozen children, and wondering why they took it so unquestioningly the very first time. In order to satisfy my curiosity on this point, I began taking a portion myself each time after serving the children. I found that the odor was much more distressing than the flavor. In teaching children to like new foods, we adults must remember that they are not so sensitive to odors and flavors as we are, and they usually need only a little time to get used to a new food. This brings me to a second circumstance that may have caused your difficulty. You may have proceeded too quickly. Aside from the distinctive flavor and characteristic odor, cod liver oil is a very concentrated fat. Given in a good sized dose, on an empty stomach, it might cause digestive disturbance even if the child did not mind taking it.

"It is possible that a third circumstance contributed to your problem if you had the feeling yourself that the oil was hard to take. If you did, you very likely unintentionally, and without knowing it yourself, let your own prejudice creep into your method of giving the oil. Little children are extremely sensitive to tone of voice, and to other indications of the emotional state of grownups. The mother who feels sorry for the child to whom she is serving something she would, herself, hate to eat, or who is over-anxious to get her child to eat a food that is new to him, is very likely to have trouble in getting him to take the food willingly. Mothers must either overcome their prejudices, or else be careful to adopt a very casual attitude in serving their children.

"My suggestion is that you try again when the children are well over the unpleasant experience you had. Use unflavored oil, beginning with about a teaspoonful in the juice of half an orange. Have no talk or pretentious preparation in offering it. It may be well to fix it when the children are not around; on the other hand it may be better to let them help fix it. You must decide that according to your children's temperament. It would be effective to fix a portion for yourself, too, and take it without comment or difficulty. You may call it fruit juice, or orange juice and cod liver oil, as seems best. If the children protest, gag, or complain about the "awful stuff," talk the situation out with them. Tell them what this is, a food really, -- the fat of the codfish. Remind them that we eat the fat of beef, pork, chicken, bacon, etc., at the table. Cod liver oil is a food, not a medicine. It does smell different from anything else we eat, but it hasn't a bad smell. It doesn't taste as much as it smells -- do you get the idea? A general rule in training children to eat new foods is the less talk the better. A good example, quietly set, often works well, but at times constructive, suggestive talk such as I have tried to outline above is helpful. The method varies with the child, the parent, and the circumstances in general. The same method does not always work equally well with different children. If you keep in mind the fact that oftentimes a distaste we seem to see is due to our own good intentions, gone astray, as we were over-zealous, or as we set a bad example, it may help straighten out the difficulty."

Thank you, Miss Schmidt: we may come to you again, for help.

This question reminds me of a story I read the other day, about two little boys, Ralph and Tommy, who were persuaded to take cod liver oil by means of a new method. Do you remember Palmer Cox's stories of the brownies? There was a helmeted policeman with a club, a sailor boy, an Indian, and a funny Englishman with a plug hat and a monocle, a walking stick and flying coat tails. The Englishman was always falling off his hobby horse. Well, it seems that Ralph and Tommy were very fond of the brownie stories. One day, when the brown bottle of cod liver oil was placed on the table, their father explained that cod liver oil is called "bottled sunshine."

"Brownies run away when the sun shines," said Ralph.

"Then this bottle would be a fine place for brownies to hide, wouldn't it?" asked father.

"Are there brownies in that bottle?" asked Tommy.

"Liquid brownies!" exclaimed mother. "What a fine idea. Liquid brownies! Brownies in a brown jug!"

"Pour some out," said Tommy, "I want to see a liquid brownie."

"Bring your spoons, boys," said their father. "Now, Ralph, which brownie shall I pour out for you? Which is your favorite in the book?"

"The sailor boy," said Ralph. "I'm always the sailor boy in the pictures."

"And I'm the pleeceman," cried Tommy. "Please give me the pleeceman, Daddy."

The boys took their cod liver oil; Ralph took all of his, but Tommy left a wee bit.

"Here, Tommy," said mother, "you left the policeman's club in the spoon. One more little taste."

The story goes that the two little boys became so interested in the liquid brownies in the brown jug, that they took their cod liver oil without protesting, and actually liked it. Of course, I don't know whether this story is true or not, but it might well be. I was interested in the moral, tacked to the end of the story. This is the moral: There are more ways of cutting a boy's hair, than running a lawn mower over him.

Well, well, time is fleeting, and we are still on the cod liver oil question.

"Tell me how to take cod liver oil stains out of a baby's bib," writes a mother. The answer to this is in the stain removal bulletin. Anyone else want it?

Just time enough left for one more question: "The other day you broadcast a breakfast menu, which included French toast. I suppose I should know how French toast is made, but I don't. Will you please tell me?"

Indeed I will. You need only five ingredients for French Toast:

2 eggs	Butter, and
1/2 to 3/4 cup milk	Bread
Salt	

Five ingredients, for French Toast: (Repeat)

Use well-baked, even-textured, rather dry bread. Cut it into uniform slices, about 1/4 inch thick. Beat the eggs, and add the milk and salt. Dip the slices of bread quickly into the egg mixture, drain, and fry at once in butter or well-seasoned fat, in a heavy smooth skillet. Use moderate heat, and let the toast become golden brown before turning. Serve at once, with bacon, or with sirup or other sweet.

No more questions today. Tomorrow: "Furnishing the Young Girl's Room."

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